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Donald Cooper is respected by clients in over 40 industries as both a “thought leader” and a passionate visionary in the areas of marketing, service and business excellence.

Drawing from his real life experience as a world-class manufacturer, award-winning retailer and business speaker, he has helped thousands of businesses throughout the world to add more real value to their customers’ lives...and more dollars to their bottom lines.

To subscribe to Donald’s thought-provoking, idea-generating, **FREE** monthly electronic **Newsletter**, email us at newsletter@donaldcooper.com.

His website, www.donaldcooper.com also offers free articles and business tools.

The Christmas Tree Man:

I often caution clients about the danger of “judging” customers by how they’re dressed, or by who they appear to be. Back in my days as a retailer of ladies fashions and gifts, I learned a powerful and moving lesson from “The Christmas Tree Man”.

Our staff came to me one December day to express concern about an unshaven, disheveled and generally unwashed gentleman who kept coming into our store. As he shuffled through our ladies clothing and gift departments he would glance out the window every few minutes and then, sometimes, he would rush out the door empty-handed. This process was repeated several times each day...sometimes resulting in a purchase and sometimes in yet another mysterious disappearance.

When he did buy he always paid cash from a huge roll of bills with an old elastic band wound twice around it. But mostly he would look out the window, then rush out the door and disappear...and this strange behavior was spooking our staff.

When our staff started making some very unflattering assumptions about this unusual gentleman, I assured them that there was probably a logical explanation and I promised to chat with him on his next visit.

Sure enough, a few hours later he reappeared. I approached him, explaining that our staff was quite intrigued by his mysterious comings and goings. “Oh”, he said, “I’m the Christmas tree man. That’s my Christmas tree lot just down the road with the little house trailer. I grow the trees on my farm up north, you know, and then I come down here for three weeks each year to sell them.

“I work all alone so I have no time off to buy gifts and I don’t get back home until well after midnight on Christmas Eve. So, whenever I have a few minutes, I rush up here to shop. I really love your store. You have wonderful things and every day I choose a few gifts for the ladies on my list.”

“But you keep looking out the window.” I said. “Oh,” he replied, “I’m just checking to see if anyone has pulled into my lot to buy a tree. And if they have, I’ve got to rush back before they leave, or I won’t get the business. You can’t replant those trees you know. Once they’re cut, they’re cut.

“By the way” he said, “I know that I don’t look like your usual customer. In fact, I probably look a bit scary and I guess I don’t smell too good either. I don’t have much more than a bed and a stove in my little trailer. No place to wash up. There’s not a lot of money in real Christmas trees anymore, you know. It’s kind of sad. But your staff, they’re so wonderful. They treat me with respect and I really appreciate that!”

The Christmas tree man spent almost \$3000 in our store over a three-week period. He came and he went, he came and he went, day after day, always looking out the window, sometimes rushing to serve a customer...and at the end, on Christmas Eve, before he left for home, he brought each of us a real Christmas tree!

For more information on how Donald Cooper can help you redefine and reinvent your business to create, deliver and communicate compelling, customer-owning Value, visit our website at www.donaldcooper.com , email us at sharen@donaldcooper.com or contact us by telephone in Toronto, Canada at 1-(416) 252-3704.